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The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority Through Architecture

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toric figures," still it is a culturally valuable landscape. For too long, preservation decisions have been made on the basis of "national importance" or "scenic wonder," qualities that often exclude the perspectives of local people and their sense of place. The strategies outlined in this book, along with government initiatives such as the development of Heritage Corridors and the National Landmark program, offer tools for identifying and preserving what is important about "ordinary" rural countryside.

The massive economic and social changes sweeping rural America pose a potentially grave threat to the landscapes we often associate with rural history and culture. This book, while not addressing many theoretical and conceptual issues, does illustrate that agricultural conservers, environmental activists, and historic preservation specialists can work together to accomplish the goals they share. As such, the book is extremely valuable not only to professionals in historic preservation but to anyone who is concerned with the future of our rural landscape and culture.

The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority through Architecture, by Charles T. Goodsell. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988. xviii, 229 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, appendix. \$25.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY WAYNE FRANKLIN, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Of all the arts, architecture is the most inherently social: very rare is the building that, whatever its claims as art, has not been built primarily as an enclosure of space. It is hard for most people to imagine "pure" architecture, an architectural construction, that is, which is intended to be nothing but a sculptural form to be looked at from the outside. Architecture is built to be entered and inhabited.

Who is to enter a building, and how it is to be inhabited, become the important social questions to ask of any building. What behavioral context is the building intended to define and implement? The most common architectural forms emerge from and implement the dominant definitions of the social groups these forms shelter. In America, the "family home" as a social ideal is mirrored and enforced by the single-family "house." Over time, changes in the social institution cause and to some extent are caused by changes in the dwelling. We know that members of a seventeenth-century New England family were closer to each other than members of a twentieth-century family in Des Moines or Pasadena merely because they had so little interior space in their houses and so much of that space was common to the

whole family. We know that the early family was also closer to the members of its larger society because there were very few ceremonial barriers between family and society.

In *The Social Meaning of Civic Space*, Charles T. Goodsell investigates, from a similar standpoint, not domestic architecture but rather those "enclosures within governmental buildings designed for the performance of political rituals." He studies seventy-four city halls across the United States (and in Ontario): twenty-five "traditional" ones, from Albany, New York's Richardsonian Romanesque structure (1878-1883), to the Beaux-Arts masterpiece (1913-1915) in San Francisco; twenty-two dating from the mid-twentieth century, ranging from Buffalo's art deco chamber (1929-1931) to the Beaux-Arts/art deco mixture seen in Kansas City's (1935-1937), and including Des Moines's Beaux Arts city hall, which was built in 1911 but remodeled in 1950, after the city abandoned the "Des Moines Plan" for the city manager form of government; and twenty-seven contemporary civic spaces, from Boston's sixties city hall to four structures dating from the 1980s in California, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. In the process of discussing these various urban political arenas, Goodsell of course casts light on the evolution of the city hall as a structure over the past century. But he is a specialist in public administration and public policy, not an architectural historian. Hence the merely structural or stylistic aspects of the evolution of the city hall matter to him only insofar as they are interconnected with the institutional patterns housed by, and in some ways promoted by, the raw buildings themselves.

I find his perspective both unusual and fresh. In distinguishing among the three periods sketched above, he suggests that we can read the actual (or prescribed) relation of the urban citizen to urban governmental bodies in the way civic space has been created and arranged and used. In the traditional city hall, for instance, the scale is at times equal to that of national parliamentary buildings: access to the chambers tends to be by very circuitous routes; prominence is given to officials who sit facing each other on raised platforms; citizens sit behind imposing barriers, at a lower level, as spectators, not participants; and architectural decoration tends to invoke the past as a subtle reinforcement and glorification of the present order. Here we see "hierarchy and discrimination" embodied in architecture, with "superior, wise, and unquestioned governmental authority" at the center and the people at the edge. In the mid-century chamber, on the other hand, much is changed: the overall space is smaller; access is by means more direct than the elaborate (and belabored) grand staircases of the past century; officials face the public in a spatial model of oppositional politics; citizens are no longer observers of government (and hence merely its sub-

jects) but rather are encouraged to engage their governors directly. Finally, in the contemporary city halls of the past three decades, much of the ceremonial aura that still survived in mid-century structures has been replaced with a simpler, but still often manipulative spatial design. One's standing in the system and where one stands in this ceremonial space tend to be less obviously related; boundaries between groups tend to be much softer. At the same time, new spatial "nodes" for the bureaucrats who are increasingly important for city government have been created. In some cases, tradition, less important in the mid-century buildings, has been given a new role. One admires, for instance, the use of the Indian kiva as a model in Scottsdale, Arizona, since here the communal circle is a fitting emblem of shared power. That Scottsdale is not readily organized tribally, however, suggests the role of subtle manipulation in these new buildings.

Goodsell's book is full of insights into how the structuring of architectural space mirrors and perpetuates models of social order. Richly illustrated with very effective photographs and many schematic drawings, it represents a truly new way of looking at, talking about, and understanding the roles of architecture in making room for (or denying a place for) certain kinds of public behavior.

Atanasoff: Forgotten Father of the Computer, by Clark R. Mollenhoff. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988. xv, 274 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

The First Electronic Computer: The Atanasoff Story, by Alice R. Burks and Arthur W. Burks. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988. xii, 387 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$30.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BERNARD O. WILLIAMS, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

These are perplexing books. Both deal with the controversy surrounding the 1973 ruling by Federal Judge Earl Larson that John W. Mauchly derived the idea for an electronic digital computer from John V. Atanasoff during a visit to Ames in 1940. Any serious student of the history of computing will be interested in the arguments presented in these books.

Clark Mollenhoff's book is a journalistic romance, presenting John Atanasoff as the brilliant pioneer of electronic computing, and depicting John Mauchly as a rogue and a thief. Alice and Arthur Burks offer detailed discussions of the design and operation of both Atanasoff's machine and the Electronic Numerical Integrator and

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